Rejection of poor quality Wheat by Iraq

1212. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO:

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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large consignments of wheat sent under the United Nations' food-for-oil programme were rejected by Iraq on the ground of poor quality;

(b) if so, the details of the investigations made into the export consignments;

(c) the steps taken to meet the standard set by Iraq and the present status of the export to that country; and

(d) the details of the efforts made to explore alternative/additional destinations for export of the surplus wheat stocked with the Food Corporation of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (c) Four consignments of wheat totalling 74018 MTs exported by 3 parties from India under the UN Food for Oil Programme have been rejected by Iraq. An official delegation visited Iraq for an on the spot assessment from 17th to 22nd May, 2001 and held discussions with the Iraqi authorities at various levels. The delegation has reported that Iraq wants to have wheat that should be totally free from inorganic matter i.e. sand, dust and also live insects. As per the International CODEX standards, foreign matter in the grain is permissible upto 2% out of which 1.5% consist of organic matter, such as, chaff, weed seeds, other edible and non-edible grains etc. Quality Specifications prescribed in the Iraqi contract provided for the presence of foreign matter upto maximum 2%. The Inspection Agency agreed by the Grain Board of Iraq had inspected the Cargo prior to shipment and declared the wheat consignment fit for human consumption and conforming to the

quality specifications of Iraqi order. However, on arrival of the consignments, at Iraqi ports, the Grain Board of Iraq insisted on 'nil' tolerance for inorganic foreign matter. The Indian delegation that visited Iraq in May, 2001 was informed by Iraqi Authorities that, according to their definition, they do not count sand particles under foreign matter. In other words, only organic foreign matter (like chaff glumes, weed seeds and other edible and inedible grains) are taken in this category. The exporters were not aware of this stipulation. The presumed that, as in the CODEX Standards, the 2% foreign matter would include upto 0.5% inorganic matter. The delegation was further informed that the Iraqi flour mills were not having adequate facilities for separation of inorganic matter because of the problem of spare parts required for maintenance of such machines owing to UN sanctions. The delegation was told that the Iraqi authorities had accordingly taken a decision to reject any wheat stocks found with inorganic matter like sand, stones, etc. The delegation was further informed that Iraq had also rejected the wheat sourced from various other countries on the same ground. FCI was also directed to ensure that no consignment of wheat is sent to Iraq unless the wheat is cleaned to meet the requirements of the Grain Board of Iraq. The Government has also directed the Food Corporation of India to set up cleaning facilities at Kandla Port or any other port from which export takes place.

(d) Wheat has been exported from the Central Pool by PSUs/ agencies *viz.* STC, MMTC, PEC, NAFED, MARKFED and NCCF to Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Oman/Dubai, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Sudan, Thailand, UAE/Sharjah, Vietnam, Yemen.